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Letter dated 21 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government I have the honour to communicate to you the following regarding document A/51/455 of 7 October 1996, which contains a letter dated 4 October 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the "Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations".

- The Government of Albania rejects all the accusations presented against the peaceful policy of the Republic of Albania, against its continuing principled position in favour of full respect for all the rights of the Albanian people in Kosova. The intentional misreading of the statement of Mr. Tritan Shehu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, made during the general debate clearly shows that, as in the past, the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) continue their propaganda of disinformation in the international community to disguise the truth about the grave situation prevailing in Kosova, which is inhabited almost entirely by Albanians who have been living in their lands for thousands of years. My Government discards and most decisively rejects the provocative and shameless assertion that "such Albanian position has recently encouraged separatist extremists to undertake terrorist action", at a time when indeed those "terrorist actions" are nothing but attempts to compromise the consistent peaceful policy the whole Albanian people of Kosova has pursued for years now, but which unfortunately has not yet met its deserved reward. As for the idle allegations concerning the situation of minorities in Albania made as a countercharge, they immediately become invalid if Belgrade would kindly read not the statement of Mr. Shehu but the report of the High Commissioner of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Max Van der Stoel,

on Albania contained in his letter dated 2 November 1994 addressed to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania and circulated as an OSCE document.

- The current situation in Kosova, where the Albanians are subjected to brutal and massive repression, is caused by the aggressive policy and discriminatory practices pursued over the last years by the Serbian regime there. The Serbian authorities are continuing their campaign of State terror through, to mention only a few forms, killing and torturing of Albanians, raids of homes throughout Kosova, illegal arrests and systematic persecution and maltreatment of political and human rights activists, imprisonment of people because of their political convictions, systematic and continued campaigns to destroy the Albanian cultural heritage, including by halting education in Albanian and crushing the efforts of the Albanians to preserve their identity in Kosova. It is not the Albanian Minister alone who describes such a dramatic state of violation of human rights, but also the reports of the special rapporteurs on the human rights situation in the former Yugoslavia, reports of non-governmental organizations, especially Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, and periodic reports of the Prishtina-based Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms. It is clear that there are no conditions whatsoever for enjoyment of human rights and freedoms in Kosova, contrary to the allegations made in document A/51/455.

- The international community and in particular the United Nations, OSCE, the European Union and the Council of Europe have called for and continue their efforts to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kosova. Resolutions 49/204 and 50/190 of the General Assembly call on the Belgrade authorities to take urgent steps to end immediately the violations of human rights and freedoms and to stop repression against the Albanians in Kosova. Furthermore, the international community has called upon the Serbian authorities to engage in serious dialogue with the legitimate representatives of the Albanians in Kosova in order to find a peaceful solution to the problem. The Belgrade authorities cannot label the international concern for Kosova an "interference in the internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". On the contrary, if there is a sincere wish for peace, then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should comply immediately with the resolutions of the General Assembly and of other United Nations bodies regarding Kosova. The reality bears witness to a continued refusal to acknowledge such documents. Furthermore, the peaceful resistance of the Albanians, which has been applauded worldwide, cannot be called "terrorism"; instead the Belgrade authorities should engage in a serious process of investigation of the latest acts of provocation, which are done in order to justify the continued State terrorism against the Albanian people in Kosova.

- The Government of Albania maintains its constructive position, based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law, that the problem of Kosova should be resolved through negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina in the presence of a credible third international party. As was stated by Mr. Tritan Shehu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, during the general debate of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Albania holds that Kosova should be given a status in conformity with the political will of its people and in accordance with the

international documents that acknowledge the right of peoples to self-determination.

- The Republic of Albania has consistently pursued a peaceful, constructive policy in favour of peace and stability in the region. Albania opposes changing borders by force and a clear testimony to this is its condemnation of the Serb aggression in territories of the former Yugoslavia. Likewise, Albania has supported the peace efforts for the former Yugoslavia and has contributed positively and concretely to those efforts. Therefore it is only right that Albania insist that after Bosnia a just solution must be found to the Kosova issue, which today remains the most critical problem in the Balkans. As in the past, the Belgrade authorities, by using such innovations as "Greater Albania" and "secession", are trying to distract the international community from the real problem of Kosova. The idea of "Greater Albania" is nothing but speculation at a time when the practice of a "Greater Serbia" undertaken by Belgrade has caused the peoples of the former Yugoslavia to pay the bloody price of 200 thousand killed, not to mention the huge number of refugees and displaced persons and the ruin of the country within and around Bosnia.

- Finally, I would like to reiterate the Government of Albania's appeal to the international community to continue to pay due attention to the important problem of Kosova in order to find a just peaceful solution to the problem, thus contributing to international peace and security.

May I request your kind assistance in circulating my letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 109 and 110 (c), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pellumb KULLA
Permanent Representative